

AGEC's Key Priorities for 2022 Federal Election

Australia has never had a national strategy on gender equality – one which comprehensively identifies and seeks to address all aspects of gender inequality as set out in [AGEC's Gender Equality Manifesto](#). Only when a comprehensive National Strategy is established by Government in collaboration with business and the broader community will Australia accelerate its pathway to achieving gender equality.



Free Universal Childcare

Women's economic security, is significantly hampered because women undertake a disproportionate share of family and caring responsibilities.

A lack of workplace flexibility further limits the opportunity for women to participate in the paid workforce.

The Grattan Institute estimates a universal subsidy set at 95% of childcare costs would cost about \$12 billion and boost GDP by \$27 billion a year.

Clearly free universal childcare would produce a net positive benefit to the economy.



Safety & Respect for Women

One woman dies every 11 days in Australia and countless more impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence.

The economic impact is estimated at over \$26 billion each year.

The prevention of violence against women must be a top priority and significantly greater investment in both short-term responsive support to women and longer-term change programs including consent, addressing gender role stereotypes, and offender support programs.



Women's Representation & Leadership

While Australian women were the first in the world who could stand for public office, today Australia stands at 54th out of 155 countries for women's political empowerment.

Women currently represent 47.7% of the workforce, but only 38% of the full-time workforce.

The workforce participation rate for women is 75.4% compared to 83.5% for men and women's participation in the workforce has a strong sector bias towards women being employed in caring industries such as childcare, aged care, health and education, with low representation in traditionally male dominated industries such as mining, energy and construction, which is a major contributor to the gender pay gap, poor economic outcomes for women.



Women's Economic Security

The Gender Pay Gap remains stubbornly high at 22.8% (all employees gender pay gap).

Under the Gender Pension Gap currently women retire with 23.4% less superannuation than men and the homelessness rate for women aged over 55 is the highest rate of increase of any age group.



National Strategy on Gender Equality

Given the marginal decline of the gender pay gap over the past 20 years, ongoing gender segregation of industry sectors, unchanging gender role stereotypes, low levels of representation of women in leadership and politics, poor retirement outcomes for women relative to men, declining numbers of women CEOs in our ASX200 firms and ongoing violence against women, AGECE believes that it is time for a national gender equality strategy through a comprehensive consultation process.

We call for a national summit of all gender focused bodies with the purpose of establishing a framework for the establishment of a National Gender Equality Strategy.

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RECOMMENDATIONS



Free Universal Childcare

Increase women's workforce participation and create a more equal distribution of caring responsibilities between men and women including:

- Adopt a system of free universal childcare to incentivise parents to remain in the workforce
- Eliminate gender bias in the Government paid and unpaid parental leave scheme by removing the distinction between primary and secondary caregiver
- The Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave Scheme to increase from 18 to 26 weeks for both parents on a "use it or lose it" basis
- Specifically address gender role stereotypes which inequitably divide domestic and caring work between men and women through a national advertising campaign



Safety & Respect for Women

Ensure safety and respect for women through a material increase in investment in:

- Services and programs that support victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment
- Long-term programs to eliminate gender stereotypes, and promote respect for women and girls
- Adopt all 55 recommendations of the Australian Human Rights Commission's Respect@Work Report



Women's Representation & Leadership

Increase women's workforce and leadership representation through:

- Equal representation at all three levels of government and cabinets
- Adopt all 28 recommendations of the Set the Standard report
- Fund non-partisan organisations to run programs for women considering entering public life to increase the representation of women at all three levels of government in Australia
- Fund an education program in schools and universities which encourages and empowers girls and young women to consider leadership positions in public and community service
- Fund a national education program in schools and universities to positively shift the perception of women and in particular, those in public office
- Investment in promoting increased female representation and leadership representation in male dominated industries
- Increased stimulus spend in female dominated care industries (childcare, aged care and disability)
- WGEA enhancements including extended reporting from Government organisations, detailed and enforceable minimum standards for organisational gender equality measurement and reporting



Women's Economic Security

Strengthen women's economic security including:

- Superannuation paid on Government paid parental leave scheme
- Public reporting of companies' gender pay gap under the Workplace Gender Equality Act (WGEA)
- WGEA introduce mandatory public reporting of gender pay gaps by employers with >100 employees
- Federal, State and local councils to be included in WGEA reporting
- Public reporting of gender pension or retirement gap
- Fair Work Act reforms include equal remuneration objective and re-evaluate carer low pay rates



National Strategy on Gender Equality

A national strategy should consider the following matters:

- A review of gender equality strategies of leading gender equality nations
- Gender balance in all Budget expenditure and all policy and program decisions to explicitly consider the impacts on women
- A gender lens is applied to all infrastructure spend
- Interventions to increase the proportion of women with relevant experience in key decision-making roles in Government and large not for profit and listed public companies using a 40:40:20 minimum standard
- Explicitly address gender issues in the National School Curriculum
- Adopt a national advertising campaign to address the impact of negative gender role stereotypes on children and young people
- Address imbalances in award and wage setting mechanisms that imbed historical biases against the caring sector
- Materially increase investment in all aspects of gender equality



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About the Australian Gender Equality Council (AGEC)

AGEC is a non-government, not for profit organisation – a peak body across a wide range of industry and community sectors advocating for gender equality. We use an evidence-based approach to highlight the facts, the benefits of change, and to ensure initiatives achieve long-term, sustainable change. We have a strong social media and online presence that focuses on building awareness across the community of the need for change with messages that connect with everyone. We operate on an entirely voluntary basis and rely on grassroots and in-kind funding. For more information on AGECE see our website www.agec.org.au

Member organisations of the Australian Gender Equality Council

- Australasian Women in Emergencies Network (AWEN)
- Australian Federation of Business & Professional Women (AFBPW)
- Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA)
- Australian Women Lawyers (AWL)
- Australian Women in Resources Alliance (AWRA)
- Economic Security for Women (eS4W)
- Elevate Her Australia (EHA)
- Engineers Australia
- Financial Services Institute of Australasia (FINSIA)
- National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC)
- Women in Super (WIS)
- National Association of Women in Operations (NAWO)
- National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC)
- Older Women's Network (OWN)
- Tradeswomen Australia (TWA)
- Transport Women Australia (TWA)
- Women and Leadership Australia (WLA)
- Women for Election Australia (WFEA)
- Women in Automotive (WinA)
- Women in Aviation Australian Chapter (WAI)
- Women in Banking and Finance (WIBF)
- Women in Digital (WID)
- Women in Gaming & Hospitality (WGA)
- Women in Super (WIS)
- Women in Technology (WIT)



Australian Gender
Equality Council
working for balance